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How Shall We Find God?

BY DWIGHT C. SMITH

O, that I knew where I might find him! Job 23:3.

NO MATTER how many other things seem to be important in life, there is only one question which profoundly disturbs men and women in every generation. It is the question, "How shall I find God?" Until that query is answered satisfactorily, there can be no lasting peace for any one of us. Here, then, is the essential province of religion: to help us find the way to the presence of God, where we shall be certain beyond any shadow of doubt that God is near, and that he cares about us.

One of the chief reasons why people are so frequently distressed over the question of finding God is the very general assumption that religious experience ought to follow a certain given pattern. Perhaps this idea grows out of the conventional attitude toward conversion, which has resulted from the great revival movements of past years.

I dare say that many of you may have had the experience of being present at some public meeting where a preacher expounded the gospel in terms which evidently meant much to him, although they left you unmoved. Then, when he asked those who were saved to stand up, you found yourself embarrassed, not knowing exactly what to do. In all likelihood, you had hitherto taken it for granted that you could be considered a Christian. At the same time, you could not honestly say that your religion meant to you what he seemed to be saying. What, then, did all this mean? Were you in fact no Christian at all? Had you simply been deceiving yourself? Had you never really found God, after all? If so, then how could you hope to find him, if this appeal left you so cold?

Whether you have had just this sort of experience, I do not know. Certainly many people have gone through something very much like it, and have been greatly

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troubled by it. Surely the reason is in part at least that they have had an unreasonable thing expected of them. For the talents and temperaments of people vary exceedingly, and their religious needs and experiences will not fit any single pattern.

The more we consider this fact, the more we see that it is highly important. To recognize it fully is not only to have a better understanding of human nature. It is to understand God better, as well. After all, if people have such considerable differences among them, it must stand to reason that God is going to make himself known to them in a wide variety of ways. If we try to force religious experience into certain narrow grooves, we are doing an injustice to our fellow men, and to God also. So long as we realize that God's dealings with men cannot be restricted by our small understanding, we must accordingly broaden our views as to the ways in which men and women may come to know God. In other words, there is not only one road by which we may approach God. There are many roads.

Thus, our first word to the person who cries out to inquire how God is to be known must be an assurance that there are many avenues of approach to God. Hence, it is not necessary to feel discouraged because we do not seem to have the kind of experience which someone else describes with joy. The way in which our neighbor goes may be closed for us, but this does not mean that our search is therefore in vain. God not only waits for us to discover him; he wants us to do so. It is for us, then, to find the road which we can successfully follow.

Consequently, our assurance that there is more than one road to God's presence carries with it a conviction of great hope. Far from despairing over the ultimate success of our search, we may pursue it with renewed confidence, being sure that what has seemed to be a failure can and must end in the great joy of discovering God even closer to us than we may have dared to hope.

I

I am sure that this truth will be more clearly seen if we turn our thoughts for a little while to three instances which appear in the Old Testament as very different ways in which men became aware of the immediate presence of God. They are important for us at this moment because in each instance the case is not only a vivid story, but is typical of what may happen to people of certain temperament and talents.

First, then, let us recall the story of Moses. You remember how the young man grew up in the royal household of Egypt. There he enjoyed every advantage which such a position could offer. He had the opportunity of being instructed by the wisest men in the land. He was, as a consequence, educated to a degree which no other Hebrew youth might hope for. It is possible that he might have risen to high rank among the talented leaders of the land, if his sympathy for his oppressed countrymen had not led him to commit an act of violence for which he found it necessary to flee from the country.

There followed a period in the land of Midian, where Moses married into the family of Jethro, the priest. Here he came under the influence of the man whose life was dedicated to the service of religion. Then, one day, out in the waste land by Mount Horeb, Moses saw something very strange. A bush was evidently ablaze without being consumed by fire. Do you remember his reaction to this surprising phenomenon?

He might have looked at it indifferently, without even seeing anything unusual. Or he might have taken one frightened look, and run away in superstitious fear. However, he did neither of these things. He said: "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." You will agree with me, I think, that this reaction of Moses to what he observed is indicative of an essentially scientific attitude. His mind was sufficiently acute to let him realize that something extraordinary was happening; and the training he had had was such as to make him want to know the reason for things. A natural event which he could not explain irresistibly drew him on to investigate. He was not a dreamer, nor yet one of those unimaginative folk who see nothing unusual as they go through life. He was a man of intellectual curiosity, who had to find out, if he could, why things happen.

In our understanding of Moses, it is important for us to see that he was this sort of man, because of what happened. The desire for scientific knowledge was what prompted him to stop in the first place. The result of his investigation, on the other hand, was a profoundly significant religious experience. For when Moses began to look for the cause of the phenomenon which he had observed, he ended by finding that he was on holy ground, in the very presence of God.

Here, therefore, is one of the roads by which men and women may be led to God. So far as Moses was concerned, his original intention was merely to pursue a problem which appealed to his trained mind. Yet it resulted in a religious experience which completely altered his life. Perhaps Jethro had given up all hope of making Moses comprehend what he was talking about when they discussed religion. Perhaps Moses himself had wondered whether he would ever experience the unmistakable presence of God, which seemed to mean so much to the older man. Then, when he engaged in the sort of investigation best suited to his capacities, the result was a transforming awareness of the immediate and all-important presence of God. It was not the conventional way to find God, but it was completely successful. In our own day we discover that many of those who pursue scientific investigation for its own sake find that at the end of their road stands God, waiting for them.

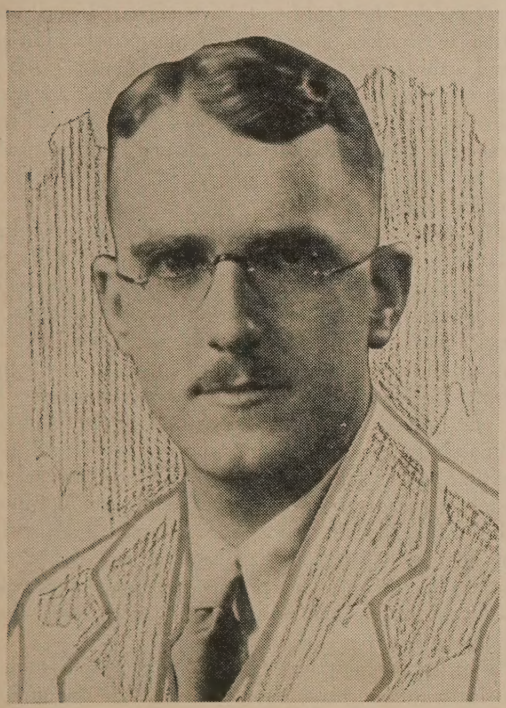
II

Quite different is the story of how Elijah discovered God's presence. Elijah was a man of intense feeling. He was a zealous reformer, the kind of man who dares oppose his king for the sake of justice and decency. Above all else, he was a man of action. Intellectual activity held little interest for him. He was a man of emotional intensity, who burned with zeal to translate his convictions into dramatic action. There is something frightening about the violence and ruthlessness with which he drove through to the ends which he was sure were right.

Such men must be forever doing things if they are to

be happy. At the same time, their very impulsiveness may get them into hot water. At any rate, it was so with Elijah. Having given himself without reserve to a great conviction, he plunged ahead, regardless of consequences. One of the most excitingly dramatic incidents in the Old Testament is Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. It is also one of the most appalling, when we read of his fierce slaughter of those whom he defeated.

The reaction was as swift as the man's own zeal. Exhausted by the intensity of his performance, he discovered that his very life was in danger. The man or woman who lives by the driving power of violent emotions must always have times of reaction, when the supply of energy runs low and life seems dark and hopeless. In such a mood Elijah ran away to hide. He fled to Mount Horeb and sought refuge in a cave.



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There, you remember, nature itself seemed to reflect the excitement of his emotional experience. Earthquake, tornado and electric storm came in quick succession. And after all this uproar, a great stillness settled upon the face of the earth. Through all the violence which nature had displayed, Elijah was somehow aware that such confusion did not bring him the sense of God's presence. Now, however, in the deep silence, he was conscious of a still, small voice. It was but the breath of a light whisper, after all that had gone before. Nevertheless, it was unmistakably God's voice speaking to him.

Thus Elijah, the man of violent emotional intensity, found that he came closest to God at the moment when nature within and without was most quiet. God did not shout at him from a long way off. God whispered to him in his very soul. At the moment when everything seemed to him to be least propitious, the still, small voice assured him of the presence of the God whom he could trust to the utmost. He probably would have said that he would be nearest to God at the moment when he was most actively engaged in tremendous struggle. But he would have been mistaken. When he was quiet, and least intent on pushing through some prodigious project, then was the time he was at last able to hear God's voice.

Others have found this to be true. Leading hair-trigger lives, perpetually keyed up over some activity or another, they engage in such violent activity that God has no chance to attract their attention, even though they think they are busy with his work. They have to cultivate moments of quiet, so that God can speak to them and make them hear. Then, deep within, they hear the still, small voice; and find the peace and assurance that come from fellowship with him.

III

The third instance of which I would remind you is the case of the young man, Isaiah. He was a man who had been singularly fortunate in the ordinary affairs of life. His family enjoyed high social position, and this young man benefited from the numerous opportunities which came from surroundings of culture and refinement. Moreover, he was by temperament particularly sensitive to things of the spirit. In a way he resembled Moses, because of his mental alertness and intellectual strength. At the same time, however, he was not the scientific sort of person. He was much more the philosopher, the kind of man whose greatest adventures are of the mind and spirit. His discoveries would be in the realm of thought rather than among natural phenomena.

This being Isaiah's disposition, it is not surprising that he should have religious experiences. Yet they would be far removed from the sort of thing which came naturally to Elijah. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine more contrasting types. Elijah, the impulsive, spectacular sort of man, whose religious activity would always stir up excitement; Isaiah, the sensitive, thoughtful kind of man whose force would be felt in people's lives not so much by driving them in some great moral crusade as in the quiet exercise of personal influence. Isaiah would be less likely to gain the spotlight of publicity, and he could perhaps never accomplish some of the spectacular things done by Elijah. But, then, neither would he be the victim of depressing reaction. Keeping to a much more even pace through life, he would in the end be regarded with greater affection by his fellow men. And who is to say which of the two would accomplish more of the work which God had for them to do? After all, God would necessarily have quite different tasks for such men.

Isaiah, then, the gentle, thoughtful man, must have spent many an hour pondering over the problems of religious certainty. Perhaps he read the stories of Elijah, and wished in his heart that he might have such overwhelming assurance of the presence of God. But the assurance did not come for the wishing. Very likely Isaiah must have wondered to himself whether he ever would have an experience of religion so soul-

shattering that it would dominate his life from that moment on.

In the course of time, you remember, the experience did come. It came at a time when Isaiah was disturbed over the political fortunes of his people. King Uzziah, who had stood as a sort of symbol of stability, had died. The nation faltered and fumbled for leadership. Like many a sensitive young man of our own times, Isaiah was greatly concerned about the welfare of his country in a time of crisis, even though he was not the aggressive sort who would think of pushing himself forward in such a time.

One day, however, he was in the Temple, worshiping, when suddenly there burst upon him the tremendous sense of the presence of God. One might almost say that it took Isaiah by surprise, even though it was in the Temple. He must often have been there before, without having had any such vivid experience. Now, however, the outward performance of worship suddenly became filled with a reality for Isaiah, such as he had scarcely dreamed of. He knew that God was there, and that God was asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Whereupon, the young man made the only possible answer under such circumstances. He said: "Here am I; send me."

There is a vast difference between this experience of the presence of God and the others which we have described. Unlike the others, this took place in the very time and place when one might suppose that a man would be most aware of God. Even so, it came as a surprise to the man who had so often gone through the motions of worship without having anything like this happen to him. He was not off in some wild solitude of desert or mountain. He was in the sanctuary where men and women were normally supposed to present themselves to God. And in this place he found the assurance of God's nearness.

So have many others. We know that our services of worship do not always seem equally vital to all who participate in them. We know also that at one time we will be much more profoundly affected than at another. Surely, however, it is the time and place when we may at least hope to meet God face to face, finding that his presence fills the whole place for us, and that he is calling us to give ourselves wholly to him.

Job, tortured and unhappy, cried out in an agony of spiritual longing: "O, that I knew where I might find him!" Throughout the years, men and women of every age have echoed that cry, their souls restless until they found rest in God.

How shall we find him? The answer is that there are many ways. You and I cannot draw the chart of how any person is going to find God's presence most certainly. There have been many times and many ways in the past; and there will continue to be in the future. The instances we have called to mind today simply serve to demonstrate the fact that God meets us in many places, oftentimes when we are least expecting to find him. If, therefore, the account of some other person's experience fails to strike fire in our own hearts, we need not be depressed. On the contrary, we may be the more certain that we shall yet find him, calling to us with an urgency that is not to be denied.

Wherever that experience finds us, we shall know with a certainty that that place is truly holy ground. And in that sacred moment we shall know that our lives mean nothing to us unless they are offered freely to him. God grant to each of us the transforming knowledge of his presence, speaking to our hearts.

Under the Juniper Tree

By Richard C. Raines

WHAT a fascinating person was grim, gaunt, old Elijah. Had he possessed the invisible cloak of the fairytales, he could not have appeared and disappeared with more disconcerting abruptness. He predicted a three years' drouth and then vanished as if the earth had swallowed him up. The most minute search was unavailing. And then, as if he had descended from the sky, he appeared before the amazed king, pointed at him an accusing finger, and cried: "Thou art the troubler of Israel."

The 19th chapter of I Kings relates how this magnetic personality, on fire with a mission, put to rout the 450 prophets of Baal in a test before all the people and brought about their destruction. That night, fatigued, worn near to exhaustion, he relaxed for the first time in months. The victory for the Lord seemed complete, the God of Jacob had been vindicated. But his purring contentment was rudely shattered by an intimate who dashed into his tent and whispered in his ear that, all unknown to Elijah, Queen Jezebel was the protector of the prophets of Baal and had sworn to kill Elijah within twenty-four hours. Elijah realized that his glorious victory had been turned to bitter defeat. With the queen a worshiper of Baal, other priests would come. He had only pruned the noxious vine—not torn it out root and branch.

Waiting for neither rest nor food, Elijah took his one intimate companion and traveled all the night to the edge of the desert, and there, leaving his friend, went a day's journey into the desert to an oasis, the existence of which no one save himself knew. He lay down underneath a juniper tree and gave vent to a veritable paean of self-pity, a classic of complaint, which ran as follows: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. For I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets, slain them with a sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

From that day to this the juniper tree has been a symbol of complaining self-pity, an unwholesome feeling of martyrdom, a persecution complex. Life, soon or late, will assail each of us with its whips and scorns. We may feel we are suffering unjustly. Then the mirage of the juniper tree's hospitable shade is most alluring, especially when we are fatigued and discouraged. Yet, when the delicate and pleasant aroma of its foliage enters our nostrils, it anesthetizes courage and our sense of humor and our perspective.

So ubiquitous is life's juniper tree, so insidious and subtle its appeal, that we will be wise to be on guard against the plausible and tempting paths which lead directly to its withering blight.

First, if we let our magnanimity, our benevolence, our generosity, sympathy and forgiveness depend upon the response in gratitude or appreciation which this high moral conduct elicits from those to whom it is directed, or upon the contribution which these moral decisions make to our outward success, we are likely to be disillusioned and discouraged and seek the juniper tree.

It was my privilege to know intimately a clever manager of a New England cotton mill who, through his

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genius for organization, had brought a near-bankrupt mill to a position of growing financial strength. He had, at the same time, increased the pay of his employees, instituted many comforts, protections and benefits for them and thought he had their real affection and loyalty. To his consternation, when a general strike was called in that city, his employees struck with the rest. It was a long conflict. The mill went into bankruptcy. He had to begin all over again. The three thousand employees lost their jobs. At first he was very bitter and stalked belligerently to the juniper tree. He said that he was through with the milk-toast manner of dealing with employees. From now he would be hard-boiled and give only as much as he was forced to. But he was too fine a man to remain long in that frame of mind, and some weeks later he confessed:

"I see it all differently. The sources of my generosity and good will were too shallow. When I come into the managerial leadership of another mill, as I shall in the near future, I shall treat my employees with the same if not more justice, helpfulness and kindliness, and my reason will be much sounder. I have come to see that I must guard the welfare of my employees, not because they are grateful or because it will make my business immune from strikes or yield greater profits, but because that is the kind of person I want to be. I believe they are husbands and sweethearts, sons and daughters, people with purposes and hopes—yes, and weaknesses even as I—brothers of mine in all that is essential, and being a follower of Jesus of Nazareth I am responsible to him for my attitudes. Just as I insist upon being a gentleman whether the immediate company about me approves or disapproves, because that's the kind of person I want to be, so I must maintain a high level of conduct and a fine scale of values because that is my duty as a follower of the Nazarene."

For high moral conduct is by no means certain to elicit either gratitude or approval, nor to bring one success as the world measures that. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jesus of Nazareth, Paul—these men of profound insight and glorious courage received instead of gratitude persecution and contumely. No, the Happy Warrior is he:

> Whose high endeavors are an inward light
> That makes the path before him always bright . . .
> Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;
> And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
> His breath in confidence of heaven's applause.

NO IMMUNITY FROM HARDSHIPS

The second road suggests that because we believe in this as a moral universe ruled by God, we have a right to expect that when our purposes are good and our ideals are unselfish and noble, we should be immune to or excused from certain of the irritations, difficulties and necessities that would fittingly apply to those with more mundane goals.

Jesus, I suppose, was at this point the most tempted individual in history. His purposes and aims were completely unselfish and holy. He tells us candidly that he was tempted to feel free to leave unprovided for some of the ordinary precautions and commonplace details binding upon others and to expect that if he should so far forget himself as to make a misstep and fall from the height of the temple, he should be protected, God's angels should bear him up lest he dash his foot against the stones. But he quickly rejected this idea as false and taught quite plainly that while the wise man built his house upon the rocks, and the foolish man built his upon the sand, the wind and the flood and the rain beat with equal ferocity upon both.

Good people often wonder why the sinful seem to prosper. We must remember that goodness is but one of the prerequisites to prosperity; that intelligence, efficiency, adaptability, initiative and dogged persistence are likewise determinative in success.

The third inviting pathway is a mistaken attitude toward the handicaps and limitations which cramp us in our development, our self-expression and our success in life. We each feel with peculiar poignancy the frustrating limitations, the terribly unideal conditions under which we must do our work and make our con-

tribution. We feel sure that our work could be of so much higher quality, and we could prove ourselves to be so much more able if only we had the proper opportunity and even fairly favorable circumstances under which to work. We tend thus to feel sorry for ourselves and to think that our situation is worse than that of other people, that we are peculiarly the victims of cruel circumstance and limited opportunity.

What we often forget is that it is the very handicaps and limitations which call into being the deeper resources of the human heart and mind and that it is only when agonizing in unideal conditions that souls have grown great or given expression to truly noble and eternal values. So that the really ideal condition for the development to the full of the resources of any soul is a condition of handicap and of hardship and of difficulty to be overcome.

They wrong men who say they are to be nursed into nobility by ease and comfort. "Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death—these are the allurements which act upon the soul of man."

A young clergyman, discouraged and feeling that this, his first parish, was a hopeless patch of weeds, scurried to the juniper tree. He sought out his father, who was also a minister, and poured out the bitterness in his heart. His father listened patiently until his son had completely relieved himself and then replied: "Son, I don't want to seem harsh, but I have no sympathy for you. Your problems are your job. If there were no problems, you would have no job."

REJOICE IN INFIRMITIES!

The problems of our generation arise very largely from two sources: first, the conscious and unconscious mistakes of our forebears plus our own, and which require that we see the truth and change our ways; and second, our problems arise as the reward for the progress and the victories which have been ours. The prize and reward for successfully completing any grade in school is to be given a chance at solving the harder problems of the next higher grade. The reward of promotion from a lower to a higher position in business is not simply a larger financial return but larger responsibility, heavier burdens, more severe discipline, a chance to tackle harder problems.

During the early years of St. Paul's life he complained bitterly that his prayers were not answered, that the thorn in the flesh which so humiliated him was not removed. But later in life we actually find him saying: "I rejoice!" And in what does he rejoice? In his victories, his journeys? "I rejoice in mine infirmities." He now realized that the hardships and the limitations which he thought would ruin his contribution and victory had actually become ministering servants, begetting in him humility, patience, gentleness, sympathy and kindliness of spirit.

It was with this in mind, I presume, that Robert Browning wrote:

> Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joy three parts pain
> Strive and hold cheap the strain.
> Learn nor account the pang,
> Dare, never grudge the throe.

The most dangerous and alluring pathway of all, leading most deviously and deceivingly to the juniper tree, opens before us when life tumbles in; when something crashes into our life and shatters into a thousand remnants our fondest hopes, our ambitions and happiness; the savings of a lifetime swept away and one too old to start over; a father and mother stand mute and trembling before a grave as deep as love and as long as life.

Occasionally one hears such advice as this given a bereaved friend: "You must accept this in a spirit of humility. It must be for the best since God sent it; it is hard to understand why it should be God's will, but some day we will know." I do not wish to seem abrupt, but such advice seems to me almost blasphemous. If some fiendish scoundrel should, under cover of dark, stealthily sneak into your home and inoculate your child or mother with tuberculosis or bubonic plague, you would have him punished, if you could catch him, as a maniac or a criminal; yet we unhesitatingly, in the name of religion, ascribe such activities to God. If God deliberately planned or willingly acquiesced in these tragedies, then I could not worship or serve him. Our Lord said: "It is not your Father's will that one of these little ones should perish." Coming in the name of God, he said: "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." To add to the burden of our grief, the insupportable idea that God, who is supposed to love us, sent this disaster to us, is to so confuse one as to who his friends are and what he may expect from them as to make him an easy victim of the juniper tree.

God has too frequently been the convenient scapegoat on whose shoulders we have loaded the blame for the hardships and sufferings for which we or other men were definitely responsible.

GOD'S WILL AND TODAY'S WRONGS

It is not God's will that children should be undernourished and underclothed, living in tenements and cities where no decent facilities for play exist, immersed in an environment which tends inevitably to mold them into budding gangsters and racketeers. It is not God's will that a mother should leave children unprotected and unguided at home while she goes out to earn their living. It is not God's will that men should go unemployed or that children should be forced or permitted to enter factories and mines. It was not God's will that you lost your health or your husband left you. God's will was for your abundant life, but your own or another's mistake intervened.

But once the blow has fallen, one can and should turn to God to ask what is the next best now that the best is seemingly gone forever. What is the interim will of God—God's will now that the disaster has come?

Placed as a family in a tenement with no immediate escape, by God's help you can show what he can do with people who turn to him in the most discouraging circumstances. The cross was a symbol of shame, punishment, degradation in New Testament days like a

gibbet or an electric chair today. Christ so followed the interim will of God that he transformed it into a sacred emblem of victory and redemption. God does not send our tragedies, but he is waiting to help us to so meet and endure them as to make them ministering powers for good.

Paganini, perhaps the most versatile violinist of all time, captivated his audiences with his matchless skill of technique, his superb effects, until they were nearly beside themselves in admiration and excitement. It is said that he was a very tall, ungainly Ichabod Crane-like man, looking like an indifferently dressed skeleton, and that when he came on the stage, violin and bow dangling from either hand, the audiences sometimes thought that a trick was being played on them and snickered.

At Leghorn in Italy the incident which this little poem describes is said to have happened.

He shuffled awkward on the stage the while
Across the waiting audience swept a smile.
With awkward stroke when first he drew the bow.
He snapped a string. The audience tittered low.
Another stroke. Off flies another string.
With laughter now the waiting galleries ring.
A third string breaks its quivering strands,
And hisses greet the player as he stands.
He stands, the while his genius unbereft
Is calm; one string, and Paganini left.
He plays—that one string's daring notes uprise
Against the storm as though it sought the skies.
A silence falls. The people bow,
And those who 'erst had hissed are weeping now.
And as the last notes quivering died away
Some shouted "Bravo!" Some had learned to pray.

For each one of us, life may involve at long last, learning to make sweet music on the one string which is left us. A sojourn to the juniper tree will not improve our technique.

THE MAKING OF A MAN

What suggestion, if followed consistently, will keep us normal, wholesome, and disdaining the juniper tree's invitation? I would summon the atheistic philosopher, Bertrand Russell, to don very queer garments for one who has so lustily sneered at the Christian faith, and ask him to bear witness on this matter in support of the gospel. For whenever he or any other philosopher has a real vision of the truth, if we will but understand it correctly, he is supporting the gospel. There is but one truth, whoever discovers it, and by whatever label one names it.

Bertrand Russell says: "A man of adequate vitality and zest will surmount all misfortunes by the emergence after each blow of an interest in life and the world, which cannot be narrowed down so much as to make one loss fatal. To be defeated by one loss or even by several is not something to be admired as proof of sensibility, but something to be deplored as failure in vitality. All our affections are at the mercy of death, which may strike down those whom we love at any moment. It is, therefore, necessary that our lives should not have that narrow intensity which puts the whole meaning and purpose of our life at the mercy of accident."

He is warning us not to put our supreme treasure where it will be subject to the accidents and misfortunes which are likely to befall any one of us.

And where is this safe place for our treasure—where this loyalty which will insure sufficient vitality and interest in life to enable us to get on our feet again after each blow? Our Lord goes beyond Bertrand Russell and tells us where. "Except a man care less for his father and mother, his family and home, his house and lands, his reputation," and he would have added, all other values, "than he cares for Me and for the Kingdom, he cannot enter the Kingdom. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, mind, strength." Why? Well, for one reason because all the other attachments are subject to accident; also because when this loyalty is first the others are all blessed and enhanced, and because only as we identify our lives with, and care supremely for, a cause so significant that its welfare and advance are more important to us than our own comfort, happiness, even life itself, are we really invulnerable—able to rise triumphantly above the worst life can bring. The only cause important enough to deserve such undivided and utter loyalty, and thus able to give invulnerability and make us shun and despise the juniper tree, is the Kingdom of God's rule upon earth among hearts and minds—the economic, industrial and political affairs of men.

The Present Truth

By Herbert L. Willett

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. II Peter 1:12.

A WRITER living in the first century of our era, the author of II Peter, in addressing a message to his friends of the Christian community, recalled their attention to some of the basic features of their sacred profession, and assured them that he was always concerned to keep them reminded of these obligations, although they understood them and were established in the truth which they possessed, "the present truth," as he terms it. This expression includes the inheritance of knowledge and faith from the past, the enjoyment of present illumination and conviction, and the hospitality to emerging truth; for all these meanings are implicit in the text, and each has received emphasis in some one of the renderings of the passage. It was the persuasion of the apostolic author that the truth which centers in Jesus Christ is the most commanding of all human interests, and that it is concerned with all areas of world experience. To him and to all of like mind, religion through the centuries has proved the most potent and inspiring of the engagements which have given motive and enthusiasm to the soul of man. It has stimulated the noblest creations of literature, music, architecture and the other arts. It has set the patterns of social progress and moral enrichment. It has placed the goals for spiritual adventure and attainment. And in the forefront of the onward-moving column of world religions Christianity manifests an ever growing leadership.

There are those who hold adverse opinions regarding religion, and are unimpressed by its paramount importance. Some regard it as a superstition, outmoded and unworthy the devotion of intelligent people. Others view it with tolerance but without interest, as a subject essential to the happiness of the timid and the immature, but not of moment to the race in general. Still others evaluate it as an aesthetic accomplishment, an emotional release, but not a necessity. Nor has there ever been a period in which Christianity was confronted by more powerful competitors than at the present time. These are not the ethnic faiths like Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, all of which have ministered to the spiritual needs of important racial groups, and some of which are in ideals and values not far removed from the faith of Jesus. These competitors are rather the pagan philosophies of materialism, fascism, nationalism and militarism which are assailing the foundations of society and contending for the souls of men. In such a time the well-being of humanity lies in the keeping of such as hold religion as the chief possession of the race, and the moral life as the supreme work of art. Never was there a time in which humanity was more disturbed, apprehensive and perplexed than at present. The degree of recovery from economic depression thus far attained has not provided a basis for confidence and stability in the domains of industry, commerce, government, education, civic relations and world ideals. No program of action appears adequate to meet the emergency of unrest and anxiety which confronts the world in our day. In the welter of conflicting opinions and speculative proposals offered for the solution of the problem of disquietude and fear which oppresses mankind the question is often asked, "Is this the end of an era of decadence and retrogression, and is humanity facing a cultural collapse comparable to that which closed the period of Roman empire and ushered in the dark ages? Or are we on the threshold of a new renaissance of intelligence and virtue?"

A BIBLICAL FAITH

In the conviction that the latter and not the former is the promise of the hour, and that the purposes of God for the earth are not to prove frustrate, one turns confidently to religion as offering the only authentic pattern of individual and social recovery and well-being; a religion that is sane and vital, a faith that embraces the proved and established teachings of the past, but as well keeps an open mind for the new truth, now and evermore emerging to view. Such a belief is what the ancient counselor of the churches in the Graeco-Roman world called "the present truth," the truth tested by past experience, the faith serene and unafraid in the midst of a changing and tremulous social order, the life creative, undepleted and timeless, which shares the hopes and aspirations of the noblest of the race, and already partakes in some measure of the life eternal.

The characteristics of such a faith are worthy of consideration. For whatever features it may disclose beyond these, it would seem that the ones now to be enumerated have an essential place in its structure.

A faith for the time, that is worthy to be called the present truth, must be a biblical faith. The Bible is the most attractive, authoritative and inspiring of the clas sics of religion. It is not the only holy book, for mos of the cultural systems professed by the various race have their sacred scriptures. But the Bible both in it prevalence and its influence surpasses them all, and penetrates all lands and all ranks with its message. I is not a book of magic, with mystical virtues of verba precision or factual exactitude. It is a human volume wrought out by men with the limitations of knowledge characteristic of other makers of world literature. But they were for the most part men who possessed an insight into ethical and spiritual meanings, and were urged on, pushed out, by a sense of exigency which one of them described as being "moved by the Spirit of

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God." As a consequence the Bible contains the two greatest chapters on religion to be found in any collection—the Old and New Testaments. These divisions are like the two portions of the Homeric epic. The Old Testament is the Iliad of the race, in which fierce contest is waged, and victory comes at last only after bitter struggles and many defeats; the New Testament is the Odyssey of the human soul, telling how after long wanderings and sore distress it comes by the grace of God to its long-sought home. No contour of an adequate social order or of a rich and fruitful personality can be conceived which leaves the Bible out of account.

A SCIENTIFIC FAITH

A faith for the time, worthy to be called the "present truth" in the biblical sense, must be scientific. This does not imply full acquaintance with the stupendous volume of new facts pouring out from laboratories, observatories, research stations and clinics, nor mastery of

the enlarging vocabulary of scientific areas. But it demands the mind hospitable to all truth, and freedom from that obscurantism which refuses to see and to welcome the new light which is continually breaking in upon mankind across many frontiers today. It is an expanding, not a static, universe in which we live, and the cosmic adventure of creation is a continuing, not a finished, event. The scriptural word, "In the beginning God created," is being given new meaning in our day, and might perhaps be more adequately rendered "God is creating" both the universe and humanity. The Bible itself presents in its advancing stages of development one of the most remarkable displays of the process of evolution, which is so plainly seen in the material world. The messengers of Christianity must not be unaware of the accepted truths of science, or hostile to them.

Too often the church has been satisfied with narrow and outworn conceptions of nature, the Bible and the Gospel. We dare not expose the new generation to antiquated interpretations of religion which are sure to be challenged and refuted by advancing knowledge. The cancellations of development mark the entire course of religion through the centuries, and the thought forms of the past are no longer suitable for the mind of today. The faith for the time must be in harmony with the facts of life and the larger meaning of the message of Jesus Christ.

A LIBERAL FAITH

The present truth must be a liberal Gospel. This does not signify a system of belief which is so generous that it has thrown away its best possessions. There are those who call themselves religious liberals who have become so wasteful of their treasures of faith that they have little left of the eternal truths. This can hardly be called a liberal endowment. By that term one implies rather an ample, inclusive faith, in which the essentials of the religious life have been embraced and safeguarded. Such a faith would rest upon belief in God, a God greater than any of our definitions can describe, but a Being who is the power in the universe that makes for righteousness, the integrative Life who is the object and end of all our desiring, the One who is worthy to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; a belief in Jesus as the Son of God, whose serene, incandescent and authoritative life is the most complete revelation of the Divine that has appeared in history, the Savior of those who take seriously his person and program, and abide in his companionship, the contagion of whose character is slowly transforming the world; a belief in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the mind of Christ, the pervading and comforting presence of the Eternal; a belief in the church as the embodiment, visible and invisible, of redeemed souls and redemptive forces throughout the world; a belief in the holy life as exemplified in the character of the Master, and realized in some measure in the experience of the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, and in the character of saints in the holy church throughout all the earth; and finally a belief in the life eternal. These are the real fundamentals of the Christian faith, no mere peripheral factors, such as those dogmas which are often given that title, but the basic realities of the Gospel.

A faith for the times, the embodiment of the present truth, implies a deep solicitude for the realization of the kingdom of God, the social order of which Jesus constantly spoke; in which childhood is cherished, womanhood honored, manhood dignified, the family reverenced, the community cultured and refined, citizenship infused with loyalty and responsibility, industry conscious alike of its rights and its obligations, business sensitive to the rectitude of its procedure and not absorbed in the profit motive, a people emancipated from the thralldom of national prejudices and the leprosy of class and racial hatreds, a world in which the crime of war shall not only be outlawed but actually relinquished, and in which the dreams of the seers, the sages and the saints of all the years, most of all of our Lord, shall in some measure come to actuality. There are those who regard these hopes as futile, who perhaps profess the Christian creed, but who would be equally shocked to have the ideals of Jesus denied or put into practice.

But such is not the attitude of those who read aright the signs of the times, and put confidence in the promises of God.

A WORLD-EMBRACING FAITH

A faith for the times, the demonstration of the present truth, will be expansive, world embracing. A new program of missionary enlargement and competence is in the making. Many older patterns of evangelism are vanishing. The devotion to sectarian institutions and divisive projects is yielding to an enlarged vision of the true nature of the Christian faith, and the recognition of the essential unity of all the followers of Jesus Christ. These are among the significant features of the historic, undepleted, unchanging yet ever expanding, timeless yet ever timely, faith of our fathers, of our own generation, and of the ages yet to be; the faith of Jesus, who is yet to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, who waits to receive the nations for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

Windows for My Soul

I WILL hew great windows for my soul,
Channels of splendor, portals of release;
Out of earth's prison walls will I hew them,
That my thundering soul may push through them;
Through the strata of human strife and passion
I will tunnel a way, I will carve and fashion
With the might of my soul's intensity
Windows fronting on immensity,
Towering out of time
I will breathe the air of another clime
That my spirit's pain may cease.
That the being of me may have room to grow,
That my eyes may meet God's eyes and know;
I will hew great windows, wonderful windows,
Measureless windows for my soul.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

When the Bush Burned

By William E. Brooks

And Moses said "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." Exodus 3:3.

IN the very interesting biography of Dwight Morrow reference is often made to a phrase used by one of his old Amherst professors to which he was constantly recurring: "Let us take a look down the corridors of time." It is a suggestive proceeding. That look backward often helps to the understanding of the look around. We repeat glibly the old saying, "History repeats itself," but we are usually so absorbed in the minutiae of today's affairs, so worried by its problems, so ignorant sometimes of history itself, that we stand in the midst of the process of repetition and do not understand it.

Now take this old story. As I read it, what did you think about it? I suspect that the question that was in the mind of many was, "How could a bush burn without being consumed?" That really is wholly irrelevant. The writer of the story saw that it was irrelevant and never bothered to answer it. But the story itself is wholly relevant. It is history repeating itself in the life of our today.

FUTILITY OF FORCE AND WEALTH

Let us take a look at the man and his setting. We know that he was raised as a son of Pharaoh's daughter and treated as a prince of the royal line, a not unknown proceeding in royal houses that needed an infiltration of new blood. We have an ancient Jewish legend that he entered on a military career and became the leader of the Egyptian army in more than one successful campaign. As such he undoubtedly came to believe, as many soldiers have, that armed force was necessary to the settling of great human problems. Living as we do in a world bristling with bayonets, we are familiar with the theory. In view of this it is interesting to examine again the incident of his slaying the Egyptian taskmaster whom he saw abusing a Hebrew slave. It seems hardly likely that Pharaoh would have exiled his favorite general for the murder of a slave-driver. Does the story mean that Moses attempted the release of his people from their sufferings through a slave insurrection? That he employed the things he had learned as a soldier in an effort to compel Pharaoh to give justice to the oppressed? In any event he had to flee from Egypt to Midian, and there he had opportunity to realize for himself that the way of the soldier never finally answers any real human problem, that force is not the final answer to anything, but that it just represses the problem to have it emerge again. And in spite of the fact that the world bristles with bayonets, and the war drums never cease their throbbing, gradually there is being borne in on minds that are open enough to see, the thing that Moses learned there in the deserts of Midian—that force is not the final answer.

Then he proceeded to try another expedient that has been much in our thought. He would purchase security through the acquirement of wealth. Evidently he looked on the woes of his people there in Egypt as a thing too big for him to handle. He would be a prince of the desert, he would acquire flocks and herds, he would achieve power through the possession of riches. Just what he would do with it we are not told. Only we know he clung to this idea for a long time and he seems to have been fairly successful in his pursuit. Then something happened—God entered! The man was evidently prepared. He could not shake off the memory of those slaves in Egypt. He had probably come to the conclusion that wealth would not solve his problem any better than would war. He was ready to hear things he would never have listened to years before.

A FRUSTRATED WORLD

Now is it clear that history is repeating itself? We have been trying the things that Moses tried in an effort to solve the world's problems—force and riches. We erected our great imperialisms to carry the White Man's Burden! Our paternalistic industrialism was to do the same thing at home. We gradually made our fields ready and extended our shops until we had the means sufficient to give comfort and plenty to all. And we are having the same experience that Moses had—we have seen all our bright schemes fail. The world that was to know the White Man's Peace is everywhere filled with war. The magnificent advances made by science and industry have ended in a sense of frustration. Henry Pitt Van Dusen, in his book *God In These Times,* gives a brilliant estimate of the situation:

> 1. The advance of man's effective mastery over Nature has accomplished the unification of the world. Through multiplied and instant communication, through the world-wide dispersion of invention and education and culture, through interlocking commercial and financial interests, the peoples of the world live in continuous and intimate contact with others and their interests are largely one. And this unification had found its most significant expression—in the World War!
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> 2. The advance of man's effective mastery over Nature has, for the first time in all human history, made thoroughly practicable the provision of adequate food, shelter, security, education, recreation, and a modest comfort for every single inhabitant of the Western world. And that possibility had taken actuality in—the present depression, with its immeasureable want, hardship, degradation and despair!
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> 3. The advance of man's effective mastery over Nature has opened wide doorways to culture, acquaintance with the rich treasures of man's past, participation in the delicate and deep imponderables of the human spirit for all who will enter. And the most general response to that invitation has been—the movies, the radio and jazz!
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> 4. The advance of man's effective mastery over Nature has promised modern man achievements and satisfactions beyond the wildest dreams of his forebears. And that promise had seen realization in the typical successful American of today—superficial, crude, blatant, confused, restless, inwardly dissatisfied.

It must have been much like that as Moses followed his flocks that desert day. Eighty years of effort and the slaves still were groaning in Egypt and all that he had done seemed to avail nothing! Then suddenly the bush burned—and God was there! Moses was ready for him. God never emerges until man has come to realize that he cannot solve his problems without him. There are signs that some at least have begun to reach that point today.

The arresting thing about the burning bush experi-

ence is not that Moses heard God but that in the hearing he was changed. His whole attitude henceforth was different. He had solved his problem; he knew where his task lay and how he was to meet it. It is this latter that does not always follow. I remember a friend of mine telling me of a young Buddhist priest whom he met in a great Chinese temple. He waited while the priest went through the hour of evening prayer, and then they sat and drank tea before the shrine and as they drank they talked. And the American was surprised at the knowledge of the Christian faith evidenced by the priest until he told him that he had gone to a mission school. "I keep my Bible up in my cell, but I worship here before this shrine." He had seen God as he

William E. Brooks

is revealed in Christ, but it had not changed him. And many of us have, with the same result. But not Moses. That day at the burning bush a startling transformation took place that made him the leader of a new day.

Environment Must Be Changed

First, he discovered that God's purpose for his people was the same as his purpose—he wanted them to be free. To do this their environment had to be changed. They could not give to the world the one splendid gift they were to give—the gift of monotheism—until they were pulled out of the slave hovels of Egypt. Man does not reach the heights when he is mired deeply in the muck of life. So Moses was to stand before Pharaoh with the imperious demand "Let my people go."

But it was not enough to change their environment. The struggle that lay ahead was not easily to be won. They had to have some tremendous incentive to enable them to persist. So Moses was to tell them that the richer life that lay beyond the struggle was God's purpose for them and that as they strove for it God was going before making their battle his as they made his battle theirs. They were to be assured of his presence day and night. He was to go before them and behind them, and so they would come to the land of his promise. And when they came into that land they were to establish a new social order there, and base it on justice and mercy and righteousness—the whole law of God.

And is not God saying that in every burning bush along the road of life today? He is telling this generation, or those who will listen to him, that the problems that bewilder them are to be met in the same way that he had Moses meet his. We have seen what Moses saw, that force and what we call "prosperity" are not solving those problems at all. Nor will the change in environment do it without something else. After you have given every family a bathtub, what then? A recent visitor to the excavations at Knossos had something to say which is startlingly appropriate to the present situation. Knossos was the center of that marvelous civilization that flourished in Crete centuries before Athens became the Mother of Beauty. The archeologist has unearthed many evidences of a mechanical skill that we thought was purely modern. The arrangements for a water supply especially were amazingly modern. And as the visitor looked at it all he gave this verdict: "The moral of Knossos is that good plumbing will not save a nation."

God's Law the Only Foundation

And that short saying embodies a principle which has been overlooked by many a serious social worker. We must have better environment for men. They cannot be allowed to grow despairing and to propagate despair in the filthy city slum or in the sometimes filthier coal camp among these mountains. They cannot be permitted to be made the slaves of another's selfishness, or of a system's selfishness, in a land we call Christian. How can anyone read the parable of the Last Judgment, which blasts into bits our shams and our evasions, and think otherwise? Ministers may not know very much about economics, as their critics declare, but if they know the mind of Jesus they know he cared immensely about human life. And so they must go—they who follow Christ—to everything that hinders human life, as God sent Moses, and say "Let my people go!"

But it is not enough to change environment. When Moses went to the slaves of Egypt he was bidden to say "I am" had sent him. It was God's purpose that they should be free to serve him, to carry out his law in life. Not simply that they might have more to eat, not merely that they hear no more the crack of the overseer's whip, but that they might build a new civilization there in the Land of Promise based upon God's law. The fuller life, the life that satisfies, could never be found in bread alone. Our age needs that message, our age with its deep hunger, its fearful frustrations. We have the outward means of life, we do not know the way of living. The word of St. Augustine was never more true than it is today: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." We need God at the center of things. We need the word that Moses carried to the slaves in Egypt that the

battle we fight is his, and he goes before. And that battle is for a new way of life, where his law is supreme.

There are burning bushes everywhere today where God waits for those who will hear his voice. In the world's doubt of its old ways; in its sense of the uselessness of the "progress" it has made; in the realization of its interdependence, that no member suffers unless all suffer with it; in the fears that arise as

> We stand, atremble and afraid,
> Upon the small worlds we have made
> Fearful lest all our poor control
> Should turn and tear us to the soul;

in all these things we have reached the point Moses reached. And what the world needs today is a host of men who will hear what God has to say when the bushes burn and go and repeat it to men.

GREAT TASKS IN HUMBLE PLACES

But immediately we answer: "What are we that we should do this thing? We live in small places, the circle of our influence is small, the group we can reach is a small group." It is in the small places that the thing must be done. Egypt was a small place, and the slaves in the land of Goshen a very small portion of the great needy human mass. But it was only as a beginning was made in the small group in that small place that the change began to affect the world. There have been great dreams held in high places in America for an ample life for all. Where they have been blocked is in the small places—the places where we live—through the greed and blindness of those who refuse to see what God showed Moses. Every change to be lasting must come from within a nation's life. And a nation lives in its towns and its villages, in its shops and farms and schools. It is there in the small places that the big transforming tasks are to be done.

Sometimes I think that the historian of the future will recognize that Robert E. Lee's chiefest claim to fame was not in the way he led armies but in the way he helped to restore Virginia from the ravages of war. He took the presidency of a little war-shattered college in a remote mountain town, and there he toiled while life lasted, building a new morale in a despairing people, shaping them for the new day, revising their educational system, teaching them all the folly of hatred. More than any other man he influenced Virginia, and still does.

Work like that needs to be done in every village in America today. Someone must see the need. Someone must stand where Moses stood and hear the word and carry it back to the place where he lives and cry "Let my people go." This is the present task. It can never be done until it is done that way.

As Britain faced one of its numerous crises some time ago there was one prophet's voice raised. It was George Lansbury's in Westminister Hall, when he said: "As I see these things, there is only the Christian way out, and once again in ringing tones mankind needs to hear the word of God calling all nations to turn away from strife and pursue the path of cooperation. No one will say there is not enough room, enough raw materials, enough markets for all. I am certain that, with the true Christian spirit applied, the white and colored races can cooperate to create a better civilization than has yet been dreamed of. If the churches, led by their leaders, will take the field and tell statesmen the solemn truth that Christ's teachings and the teachings of all great philosophers is not moonshine, not sentiment, but cold solid truth, and has within it the promise of this life, a great revolution in man's thoughts and actions will take place. In this day of ours, through the providence and mercy of God, science and invention enable us to say there is power to give the highest and noblest life to all the children of men, no matter whether they are born black, brown, yellow or white."

But we have to bring that down to our own church, to our own community, to the group we can touch. More than we realize are ready for the message of a new order where God's way is our way. They stand where Moses stood before the bush burned. It is for us to carry the message he heard to them. It won't be easy. Moses did not find it so. But what he did find was that God kept his word. He was with him as he said he would be.

The Gospel of Affirmation

By Frederick W. Norwood

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10.

I WOULD like for you to realize the setting of these words. You must have noticed that all the great discourses of Jesus give the impression of having been impromptu. They never suggest that they have been carefully and deliberately prepared; they are always called out by some incident. Even his great parables, I believe, were coined on the spur of the moment, and usually in the midst of a great crisis. His mind was so composed, his thought was so clear that it issued across his lips without effort when the moment called it forth.

The incident that prompted this saying was not very important in itself. There was a poor, unfortunate man who had been born blind. He grew in body and increased in years, but he seemed ever to be in bondage. He was deprived of the most natural and the most wonderful way of making contact with others and of gaining perspective. There was no future for him except the life of a beggar. At the same time he was a Jew and a member of the great Jewish ecclesiastical system. Nobody ever challenged his right to be that. Nobody was hurt by the problem of his blindness. The great Jewish church took no responsibility for that. It was beyond its province, it was an act of God. There were people who of their charity gave him assistance. There were people who sometimes looked upon him and discussed him as an interesting though perplexing case. The disciples of Jesus themselves were of this kind. We hear them say, as they pass by, "Lord, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Then one day Jesus met him and gave him sight. The

content of his life was enriched, his outlook was enlarged, he was a new man. So much so, that when people saw him, though they were familiar with his appearance, they debated with themselves whether it was really he or someone else. "Is this he," said some, "who was born blind and who is a beggar?" And others said, "It is like him," and he himself said, "I am he."

Then, curiously enough, he found himself in conflict with the religious institution of his time. He was put under challenge. They were annoyed because he had been healed on the Sabbath day, which was contrary to the law; and still more, because he had been healed by Jesus, whose claims were not admitted by the religious authorities of his day. Instead of being glad that his life had been enriched and his outlook widened, they cast him out. Better a man blind, docile within the institution, than a man seeing and challenging the institution.

CHRIST THE ONLY DOOR

It is like that with institutions. They tend to put the stress upon uniformity, upon docility; and because this man broke through the uniformity of conventional practice they excommunicated him.

Then Jesus found him again and on the impulse of the moment told the parable of the Good Shepherd. Obviously his heart was indignant against the men who were in authority under the name of God. Instead of rejoicing at the good fortune which had come to this man they were actually penalizing him for it, and Jesus told this parable in which he stressed the fact that the sheep's only need was not a fold. It is as necessary for the sheep to go out of the fold to find pasture, as it is to go into the fold to find security. He called himself the Good Shepherd, meaning the Faithful Shepherd. He declared that he was the door of the sheep. If you have been in the East, you have probably seen some of the very primitive sheepfolds which are used even to this day. They are shaped something like a letter "C" with an opening between the two ends of the wall, and there, by the door, the shepherd would lie down at night to guard the sheep from marauding wolves. Jesus called himself the door of the sheep, and declared that he would lay down his life for them, and that he laid it down of himself, and no one took it from him. He had power to lay it down, and he had power to take it again. For this commandment, said he, he had received of the Father, and then he gave expression to this most beautiful and most characteristic word: "I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." As soon as we hear that word upon his lips we perceive how characteristic it was of him. Jesus was, to say the very least of him, the most vital person who has ever lived in this world. He has thrown the shadow of his influence further than anybody else who has ever lived.

NAPOLEON AND CHRIST

I think it was Nietzsche who said that Napoleon was the most vital man who had ever lived. But consider how much Napoleon owed to the magnetic power by which he caused other men to surrender their personalities to him, and even their lives. How futile he would have been without his armies; how futile he actually became when he lost his armies; what a pale shadow the man was in St. Helena; and though he be of historic significance and of intriguing personality, who would describe him as a vital power in the lives of men today?

But Jesus stood alone, and all that has come from him is derived from him direct. There are great institutions which have been created in his name, there are great historic combinations which owe their genesis to him; but he is greater than the institution, he *is* the institution. The most powerful institution, without the vitality of Jesus, would be a prison-house and a barrier to freedom. And to this day, whether in the mightiest of religious institutions or in the frailest of them, there is only one way back to vitality and that is the way back to Jesus. To get closer to him and to receive of his spirit is the one and only source of religious vitality.

FREDERICK W. NORWOOD

Now if you observe the life of our Lord and listen to his words as we get them in the Gospels, you cannot fail to be impressed by this perennial freshness and power. He loved all living things. He loved the flower of the field, the bird of the air, the creature of the forest. He loved all men. He never had an enemy. Not that he loved without discrimination. He chose twelve to be his intimates. Among those twelve there was one of whom the others said that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is said that he loved Mary and Martha, and Lazarus, their brother. There were times when he resisted men. There were times when he denounced men. There was one man of whom he said it had been better had he never been born. There was another man whom he once called a fox. He never hated any man, he never despised any man, whether he was great or small, righteous or unrighteous. He found interest and charm and kindling for his faith even in publicans and sinners, outcasts and despised among men. He had a word of com-

passion and a plea for forgiveness even for those who were in the act of nailing him on the cross. He loved life. He believed in it. He went about doing good.

We are told that he healed the sick. We cannot say precisely how he did it. He used no therapeutic aids apparently, and the nearest we can get to the truth, one feels sure, is to say that he actually gave of his life to other people. It is noticeable in the records that when he healed the sick he always looked into their eyes and got them to look into his. It was not hypnotism, though it was not devoid of hypnotic quality. He gave of himself and sometimes he was wearied to the point of sheer exhaustion by this lavish giving. Once, you remember, in a dense crowd, a woman put her trembling hand through the throng and touched the hem of his garment, and Jesus detected it. What he detected was not the touch upon his garment. The disciples said, reasonably enough, "Lord, the people throng thee." It was not the touch upon his garment: the evangelist tells us that "Jesus perceived that virtue had gone out of him." That woman had drawn upon the life force of Jesus. He gave himself always.

NOT ARGUMENTS, BUT LIFE

Jesus was ever accustomed to speak of his message in terms of life. "The words that I speak unto you," he said, "they are spirit and they are life." They were not dry arguments, products of the logical processes of his brain. They were his own life and the life of the Eternal that he gave to people. His bitterest lament on one occasion was, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." He never spoke of death, though he lived under the shadow of it consciously; though he knew that he was to die tragically and poignantly and abruptly. He only spoke of that as a happening that was inevitable. But he was never morbid about death. He did not admit it. He did not admit it even for those who believed on him. He asked them deliberately to live in terms of eternity. He knew very well, of course, that as the children of men they would die some time or another, but he asked them to live as those who were alive forever. "He that heareth my words," said he on one occasion, "and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

For him, God was a living God. He said, "He is not the God of the dead, he is the God of the living," as though there was no such thing as death in all God's universe. There is what we call mortality, there is what we call matter, but it would seem that in the mind of Jesus it was all part of the overflowing life of the eternal. "He is not the God of the dead, he is the God of the living." He believed that men could grow, grow better, grow into the life of God. He put no limits to their development save the limits of their faith. He used to say to them again and again, "All things are possible to him that believeth." He interpreted religion in terms of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of God for him was life eternal. "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." In every word that he ever spoke, this great saying is implicit, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

Jesus is the very personification of life. We do not half believe in life. It is really the source of most of our difficulties, and we do not half believe in life because we do not half believe in God. We seem to forget that all the arts and all the sciences would never have had any significance at all if it had not been for human life, for human consciousness. We teach these things today as if they had power in themselves to condition life, to dictate to life. We talk about the starry heaven in all its magnitude and illimitable wonder as if *it* conditioned life. Not so. The stars mean nothing to me, save as my own experience interprets them and has fellowship with them. The stars may stare at me, but they cannot crush me. The stars in their magnitude, in their glory, in their multitude are the increase of my life, of my self-consciousness. I exult in them because I can see them, understand them dimly, and follow the guidance of the experts until I learn what conditions them. But we have a way of handling the sciences as if they were the realities and we were only onlookers, as it were, to be dictated to, to be browbeaten by them. It is that from which we are suffering. We have gone into slavery to *things*.

We need no message more desperately than the message Christ brought, the message concerning the value and dignity of life. We teach morals as if they had function only between man and man. There are no deep morals merely between man and man. Morals need a deeper foundation than that, a wider sweep. What I do to my fellow man ultimately depends upon what I think of the universe. If there is nothing else in it when I meet my fellow man, except that we stand on the same field, with nothing behind us and nothing within us, why then he may be my rival, my enemy, or my friend. I am in the grip of my moods or my interests. I cannot get down to a basis of conduct that way. I want a universe. I want some kind of belief in the ultimate meaning of things, even to settle for me what I am to do to my fellow man.

We are surrendering ourselves far too much to institutions, to massed formations, to great, organized, drilled and inveterate systems. It almost looks as if the human race will be stultified soon, unless there can be set flowing again in our midst, tides of life.

NO SURRENDER TO WORLDLY POWER

Look around you and see how in these days of great knowledge and apparent individuality of thought the destinies of men are falling into the grip of dictatorships. "Thou shalt not," is thundering around the world. "Thou shalt not break step—thou shalt not get out of line." You may have a certain kind of freedom if you march all together. Your combined thrust will be mighty, but you must not stand higher than your fellows, and you must not break step. Bolshevism, the nazis—everywhere you can see it. You would not deny there was force about it. You would not deny that there was distinctiveness of objective, but you ought to deny that there is fulness of life. We cannot surrender like that.

Life! Christ came to make me alive—alive in every fiber; life in this mortal body which yet is the temple of the Most High. I am that which wills to live set in the midst of all that wills to live. I am to believe in life,

and if I would follow Christ I must not surrender to anybody or to anything, not even to a bad temper, not even to the fear of death, not to anything that diminishes or defiles the fountain of life within.

If I am to follow Christ I am to be loyal to institutions but I am not to be their slave. There are many people today who seem to be almost eager to get within the covers of some institution that can set their minds at rest and will be content with their obedience rather than with their activity or their challenge. It is necessary to challenge. There is not an institution in the world, there never has been one, there never will be one, political or religious, that can afford to be exempted from the right of its own people to question it and challenge it.

The sheep must go out as well as come in if they are to find pasture. Christ came to set us in tune with the universe, in tune with God, in harmony with all men, in harmony with all things. Once to a halting disciple he said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." There have never been other lips since the world began which could have uttered that saying—the Way, the Truth and the Life. Yet on his lips it is not arrogance—it is vitality, it is conscious reality. He said that to a man who was doubting, and in the spirit he says it still to you and me. The Way—you may begin to tread it. Are you willing to begin? The Truth—you may begin to explore it. Are you willing to begin? The Life—you may believe. Are you willing to believe?

I do most solemnly and earnestly and poignantly realize here in this very hour that the eternal spirit of the Christ is still with us and his word is being spoken to me, to you. To you—will you hear it? "I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly."

The Christian and His City

By Harold B. Camp

Come, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. Genesis 11:4.

WHAT an age-old desire it is—this desire to build a city! In every generation it has drawn the feet of countless multitudes from the hinterland, the prairie, the farm and the crossroads. "Come, let us build a city"—that cry comes up from something very deep in the heart of man. Man is a gregarious creature. Cattle go in herds, sheep in droves, birds in flocks, bees in swarms, ants in colonies, fish in schools, and men in crowds. "Come, let us build a city"—you can put your finger here and say, "this marks the beginning of civilization." The city is the unit of civilization. Personality is a social product. Most of the necessities of man's continued existence come out of society. His needs are so many, so varied and so complex they can be met only in cooperation with his kind. It is the city which gives him a hospital, without which he would be marked by disease for an early grave. Man alone cannot build a hospital. Because he lives in a city there is a bottle of milk at his back door in the morning and a newspaper at his front door in the evening. Man alone cannot deliver his own milk and publish his own newspaper. The telephone and the telegraph, the train and the automobile, the electric light and the store are all made in the city. Man alone cannot secure the conveniences which enlarge his life. How cramped, how cribbed, how coffined would be man's life if men had not said, "Come, let us build a city lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth."

MAN'S HUNGER FOR BEAUTY

Not only does the city supply the world with many of the necessities of man's existence but it is out of the city that things of inspiration and beauty come. Man shall not live by bread alone. In this ancient dream of a city these men of far off yesterdays wanted beauty as well as bread and safety. They said (perhaps it was an amendment to the original motion), "let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven."

Now I am aware that many sermons have been preached condemning these builders for trying to outdo God. They have been accused of arrogance, vanity and blasphemy. I do not see it that way. I see in their savage hearts a haunting hunger for beauty, and they were only trying to make explicit what God had made implicit in their spirits. It was not enough that they should have a city of houses for shelter, and a city of walls for safety, and a city of laws for security and sanitation, but they must have a tower as well. Man is not long satisfied with mere creature appeasement. Unseen hungers and thirsts are in him which bread and water cannot assuage. His ear listens for melodies as much as warnings of danger. His eyes long for sunsets as well as sights of safety. He needs not only a vegetable garden but a rose garden also. He builds four walls to keep out the wind and the cold but he treasures those walls paintings and tapestries. He wants a city with towering hills and a wide ocean to look out upon, and a beautiful lake at its heart. Your city has its satisfactions for the soul. There you will find the cathedral, the art gallery, the library and the university.

—"and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." That tower was to speak of man's response to the spiritual. It was to be the symbol of his need of God. That tower reaching unto heaven was meant to be the center of all his inspiration and quest of beauty. You cannot build a city without faith in God. Atheism is forever sterile. It never wrote a poem. It never composed a symphony. It never painted a masterpiece. It never erected a hospital. It never endowed a university. It never established a philanthropy. It never dried a tear. "Come let us build a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth."

MAKING A NAME IN THE CITY

Not only is the city the place of safety and the source of inspiration; it is also the arena of opportunity. "Let us build a city and a tower—and let us make a name."

Once again I do not condemn the men in this ancient story because they wanted a city that they might have careers. Ruskin has commented on this text; he calls it "a wormy ambition, putridly dissolute and forever on the crawl." I think he is mistaken. It was the city which gave Ruskin a name. And most men get their chance to make some little footprints which show that they passed this way, by reason of the existence of the city.

You can do more good in the city for the obvious reason there are more people to do good to. The names of the world's great are linked with cities. Spurgeon came to the city of London at the age of eighteen and in a few months he was heralded as one of the mightiest preachers of his generation. Phillips Brooks did a great deal for Boston and Boston did a greal deal for Phillips Brooks. Chicago was the arena for the devoted social passion of Jane Addams. Andrew Carnegie was made by Pittsburgh, and John D. Rockefeller was made by Cleveland.

A TRIBUTE TO THE CITY

Thomas Gray paid an indirect tribute to the city as a place in which to make a name in his immortal "Elegy in a Country Churchyard":

> Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
> Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
> Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre;
>
> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

You see the city is often the background of a great ministry, and the sounding-board of a great voice.

The poet saw in the city a chance for the man of genius, but also the opening for the megalomaniac and the tyrant:

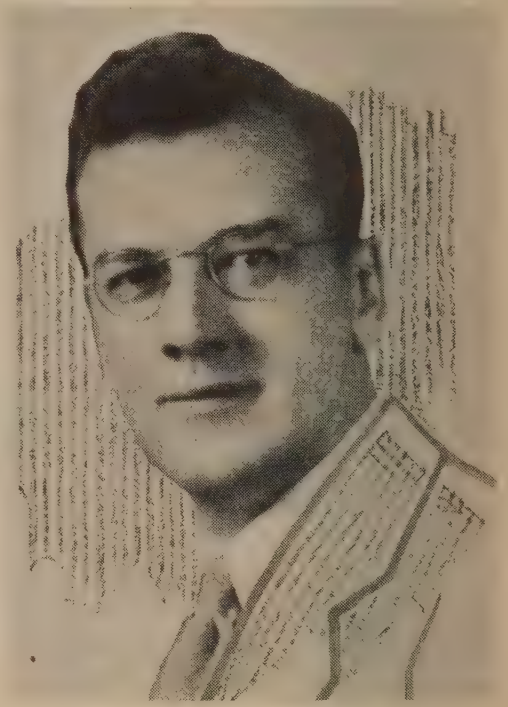
> Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
> The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
> Some mute, inglorious Milton, here may rest;
> Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.
>
> Their lot forbade, nor circumscribed alone
> Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
> Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
> And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.
>
> Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
> Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
> Along the cool sequestered vale of life
> They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

HISTORY MADE IN CITIES

The city takes what you are and what you have and magnifies it, no matter what it is. It is the place for the bass drum and the megaphone. If you are a good man, you may be a great good man in the city. If you are a bad man, you may be a notoriously bad man in the city. What a blessing that Harry Emerson Fosdick went to the city! What a terrible thing that Adolf Hitler ever left the little Austrian village of Braunau for the city of Munich!

"Come, let us build a city and make a name." History is made in the cities. The history of the ancient world is, for the most part, the diary of Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, Athens, Alexandria. The history of modern Europe is made in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Leningrad. The history of America gathers in large measure about the Puritans in Boston, the Knickerbockers in New York, the Quakers in Philadelphia, the Creoles in New Orleans, the Argonauts in San Francisco.

Cities spell opportunity for God as well as for man. If God loses the city he loses the world. In this old story God is pictured as coming down to watch the building of the city. With respect to the anthropomorphism of



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that story, representing God as having a human form, we are unimpressed; it simply reveals the religious conception of Deity in that primitive age. With respect to God's concern for what is going on in the city, his concern for its politics, its laws, its ideals and institutions, we cannot but be impressed. As go the cities, so goes the nation. If a city is corrupt, if it is lawless, if it is ruled by crooked politicians, it will prove a festering source of infection throughout the land. So you find throughout history that cities have been held up to judgment by the prophets of God. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their wickedness, Jonah preached against Nineveh, Savonarola indicted Florence, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. It was in the city that Christ was crucified. No amount of rose petals strewn from a rostrum can conceal the ugly fact that our cities are often full of crime, prostitution, graft, poverty, shame. No more grim and shameful picture of the city can be seen than that which is seen in a recent Broadway play, "Dead End." There you see, in all its brutal and un-

adorned reality, the spawning ground of the criminal in the dirty, crowded, poverty-ridden tenements of a city alley. It is indeed true, as go the cities so goes the nation.

If you want to make your life count for the most, invest it for God and the Kingdom in a great city. If you want to go to the devil in a big way, go to the city. In the city heaven and hell are all mixed up. In the city all extremes of life meet and all tastes converge. In the city there is Dives luxuriating in his big house on the avenue, and just around the corner is Lazarus rotting in his alley. In the city you will find the scurvy politician and over against him the public servant. Yes, the city is a conglomeration of all there is from all over the earth.

CITIES ARE BUILT OF SOULS

Let us get back to the Scripture where we found our text. Men wanted to build a city. That was a desire rooted in instinct. They wanted to build a tower. That was an expression of the longing for inspiration and beauty. They wanted to make a name. That is a hunger common to us all. So far, so good. But that city they dreamed was never made. Why did it fall to earth? To be sure, in the story, as is so characteristic in primitive religion, the jealousies and weaknesses and selfish ambitions of men are laid over on God, so that God is represented as the jealous and petulant party in the failure, yet the cause of defeat was on the hearts of the builders themselves. They began to speak a divisive language. They talked the tongues of discord and disharmony. They spread rumors and tales which undermined cooperation and good will. They fostered intolerance and unbrotherliness. So the city which they dreamed perished by their hate and ill will.

My friends, we are building a city. Our city can never be built after God's plan without a great good will for all who cherish in their hearts the same desire to have a city in which there is security of existence, inspiration to beauty, and opportunities for real success. The source of our city's greatness, as was the source of that ancient city's greatness, is not material but spiritual. It is not of brick, nor stone, nor wood, but of the hearts and souls of men that a city is made.

You will never have a city with the qualities and privileges in which life is truly livable until you have men and women who live together in peace, brotherliness and sincere good will. Those spiritual necessities come from God.

Give me, and my kind, a chance in the building of this city. We need each other, and all of us need the guidance and blessing of God. It isn't money we need so much as manhood; not commerce so much as character, not plans so much as principles.

We are all blind until we see
That, in the human plan,
Nothing is worth the making
If it does not make the man.

Why build these cities glorious
If man unbuilded goes?
In vain we build the world
Unless—the builder also grows.

The Reproof of Life

By Arthur H. Bradford

The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. Proverbs 15:31.

FOR our text this morning we turn to an ancient proverb. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise." To abide among the wise may be taken to mean what Kipling had in mind when he said:

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs . . .
If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim . . . .

If this be the meaning of the phrase, "To abide among the wise," its importance cannot be exaggerated.

To keep one's head in times like the present is something of an achievement. It may be a major form of public service. Indeed it may prove to be the greatest contribution most of us can make to the welfare of our country this year. For a great many people in this vast country of ours—not to mention our own particular neighborhood—are going to lose their heads and their tempers in the months ahead, if they have not lost them already. A great many people are going to make dreams their masters—dreams born of their own failure to cope with reality—dreams of things they wish for, costly things, which they hope to have, without effort. It is good to dream! Dreams may make us masters of our fate. But when dreams blind our eyes to the stern facts of life; when they kindle our desire to get something for nothing; when they turn us into enthusiasts for plans and programs the like of which has never worked on land or sea—then dreams in our heads are more dangerous than dynamite in the hands of a child.

This country of ours is full of dreams. Like clouds, they appear in the East—in New England and New York, in the South, in the West, and all winds seem to blow them in the direction of the nation's capital. Let us not forget that dreams of wise men gave our country her greatness; but foolish dreams, capturing the minds of the thoughtless, could destroy her. If we can think—and not make thoughts our aim—perhaps we can have some real share in the creative work which needs to be done in these critical days of our nation's and the world's life.

Now, according to our ancient proverb, power to abide among the wise results from having an ear to hear the reproof of life. I want to ask you to think with me for a moment about the significance of this phrase. What does it mean?

LIFE AS A TEACHER

It means that the greatest of all teachers is life itself. It means that all of us, and all people everywhere, are in the School of Life. We are on this earth to learn. As truly as every college professor or schoolteacher gives words of approval or reproof to his pupils, so life approves or reproves us; and, if we have ears to hear, we may keep moving ahead with life, to the end of our days. Every experience which comes to us, however

sad and disappointing, or however joyous and satisfying, is an opportunity for us to learn something important. According as we learn what life is trying to teach, we move forward or we slip back, or stay where we are.

I remember a boy in high school, with whom I used to play football. One autumn, when practice began, I asked him if he were not a senior. "Oh, no," he said good-naturedly. "I am a sophomore. I got promoted backwards." That happens in the School of Life. We are meant to move ahead. We always can, if only we are listening intently enough to hear the reproof of life when it is given to us.

Some who move ahead the fastest and the farthest learn by means of their follies and mistakes, and some who do not move ahead with life owe their failure not to their follies, mistakes and disappointments—which are excellent lesson material—but to their lack of capacity to heed life's reproof, and to learn thereby.

Let me illustrate by quoting a sentence or two written by the critic of a recent book. The book is an autobiography. It tries to tell "all the facts and details" of a life overfull of failure and folly. The writer belongs to what is called the lost generation. He seems to have lost himself in the years following the war. I have not read the book. My only concern with it at the moment is what one critic says about it. "The real point of the book," he says, "lies not in the dalliance it records but in the fact that the dalliance taught him so little."—"He has faithfully rendered his emotions without really collecting his thoughts." "His idle Paris moments might have been the beginning of wisdom, but the truth is that a once very promising writer is less interesting today, not because he fell for a time by the wayside, but because he has not toughened intellectually—because he has not, during a convulsed era, moved ahead with life."

ARE WE MOVING AHEAD WITH LIFE?

Whether this criticism is deserved by the author to whom it was directed, I cannot say; but I know it is just the criticism deserved by multitudes of people today and, I believe, by the modern world itself.

The important things about us are not our failures or successes, not our joys or sorrows, not our self-denials or indulgences; the important thing about us is what these things have taught us. When we think or speak about them do we merely render our emotions?—or do we actually collect our thoughts? If we have passed through periods of idleness or riotous living did they become for us the beginning of wisdom? Are we moving ahead with life?

These are searching questions. We ought to face them. The whole country ought to face them. Great is the present need for the ear that heareth the reproof of life and therefore abides with the wise.

Within the memory of most of us our country has passed through a great variety of experiences. There was the comparative calm and security of life before 1914. There were the terrible years of war. There were the years of folly and disillusionment immediately following the war. There were the years of gambling madness when almost everyone seemed to be as much mastered by foolish dreams as are the crowds which squander their own and other people's money at the Narragansett race track. There have been the year since 1929.

What has happened to us and to our country in al these changing years is of comparatively little impor tance. The really important thing is—what have al these happenings taught us? Have we had an ear t hear the reproof of life? Have we grown in wisdom; s that we are now moving forward with life?

I have great sympathy with Mr. John Chamberlai when he states that to him the whole present contentiou argument as to why the United States went into th World War seems of very secondary importance. H recognizes that the question is of interest and "importan for historians to clear up." "But," says he, "the mai

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point to be settled is the one of 'wisdom versus idi ocy'!" For himself he seems to hold that life has bee trying to teach us through these years that wars an economic arrangements which lead to war are in th realm of "idiocy." I, for one, believe he is right.

THE PROPHET'S WORD STILL TRUE

Surely life has been reproving us all through thes fateful years. Life itself has told us so clearly that w have no excuse for not understanding that war an the practices which lead to war are madness. And lif is reproving us now, if only we have ears to hear th reproof, for thinking that we can save our country o solve any of its major problems without regard for suc moral principles as these offered by the prophet who call us to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly (tha is, be willing to learn) with life, and so, with God.

It does not require the genius of a prophet to be abl to declare, with conviction, that the future welfare o our beloved country does not depend primarily upo

hose who, thinking of their own interest, say the New Deal is all right or it is all wrong; or that the Constitution is perfect as it is or that we should get rid of t altogether. The welfare of the country depends primarily upon those of its citizens who are disinterested enough, unselfish enough, unprejudiced enough to hear, hrough the noise and the tumult of these trying days, he reproof which life itself is pronouncing upon us and our too selfish ways of living. Life is trying—yes, God, he giver of life—is trying to teach us to live together n this planet, with sanity, understanding, good will nd mutual helpfulness. According to our capacity to eed the admonition of life itself so shall the value of ur service to our country be.

Jesus called men to follow him that with him they night help to establish what he called the kingdom of eaven on earth. His one requirement of them was that hey should be willing to learn.

He calls us still. The requirement is unchanged. As Jesus' followers we can accept nothing as perfect or final vhich fails to express his spirit. Upon everything which goes counter to his spirit, however ancient or however fashionable or however profitable it be, we must hear is reproof, which is the reproof of life itself.

Christ moves on. And we, with humble, penitent earts—please God!—shall move on with him, be the ost what it may.

The World's Fever

WHAT ails the world? There never was a time when he intellectual conviction was so widespread in Europe hat another war will be the downfall of its civilization; never a time when the specific subjects of quarrel were o few, so completely irrelevant to the problems of nament by gentle means, so defiant of treatment by force. Yet never was fear so universal, and the very irrationality of the manifestations of national spirit seems to increase its inflammation. What is the explanation?

One answer may be that one generation seems to have the courage of its wrong ideas, but not the courage of its ideas that are right. Another answer is that man, thanks to science, has developed his physical and material power out of all proportion to his moral and intellectual nature and beyond his ability to control it. Yet a third answer—not by any means the whole truth, but an aspect of it—is that the world has contracted so much that everyone's business is everyone else's. We are in danger of forgetting that to mind our own business, though not the whole duty of political man, is at any rate a part of it. This country cannot possibly serve the world by injuring itself. THE LONDON TIMES.

A MEMBER of the younger generation asked me no less than a month ago, "Do you want to know why I do not attend your church?" Of course I wished to know. I anticipated some friendly criticism of sermons, or an objection to a particular part of the service. But this was the reason: "I go to the———church because it is absolutely silent there; in your church people carry on conversations after they get inside the church."

I had no answer to give. In the pulpit I have no way of knowing the justice of this criticism. I do not know whether a buzz of conversation spoils the atmosphere or not; I am sure that nothing could have been said regarding our church that would have surprised me much more.

Of course we cannot concern ourselves with every passing criticism, but this was made in good spirit, and it touches upon a very important essential of worship. One worships only when one has left the noises and conversations of the world behind. Whatever else may be needed to worship, silence is an absolute requisite. The ministry of silence is one of the greatest values of a church service. —*From a church calendar.*

A Pastoral Prayer

BY EDWIN A. GOLDSWORTHY

ALMIGHTY GOD, who bringest out of the eternal centuries this one day, and givest it to us, we thank Thee that we live to receive it from Thee gratefully. In Thy power and wisdom Thou hast given us not only the day but also the freedom to live in it. Help us so to live that at eventide we may give it back to Thee a better day because it visited the earth and found us here.

O loving Father, who hast forgiven us many wasted hours, we marvel at Thy wondrous patience. So long Thou hast been giving us hours which we have ruined with angry and impatient tempers, hours made dark with brooding and disturbing thoughts, hours returned to Thee empty because we have lived to no purpose but to pass the time away, hours streaked and stained with complaining or with envy because others were enjoying what we should like to have. O God, forgive us for those hours. May we never live them through again.

We thank Thee for doorways in our dark and stuffy lives, for all the adventures of the spirit in which we may explore the beauties of Thy world, the richness of thought of the poets, the reckonings of science, the spiritual mountain climbing of great, kindly, God-fearing lives.

We bless Thee for warm and loving hearts that have often saved us from ourselves, and for the last loving haven from the loneliness of life, even the eternal friendship of Thy great heart, O God.

Help us to send this day back to Thee with friendships made more loving, pain borne more understandingly, hours lived more fruitfully, some temptation fought successfully, and a fine high hope singing in our hearts.

Help Thy world, O God, to send Thee back this day with the cause of human peace strengthened, with the nations' aspirations purified, with honest justice the aim of employer and employee. Grant every child of Thine wisdom large enough to make life secure and loving kindness broad enough to make life a blessing.

In the spirit of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

'Forgive Us Our Debts'

By Robert Cashman

ARE church debts ever justified? If so, in what amounts? And for what purposes? Business borrows money for expansion. Why not the church?

"A debt is a stimulus to a working church," according to many ministers, "just as a loaded wagon is a stimulus to a pulling horse." "What would our Ladies' Aid Societies do, if there were no church debts?" they ask. Or, "Why should we build a church, and finance it fully ourselves, when future generations also are to enjoy the benefits? Why not spread it a bit?" And on the other hand, "What right have we to mortgage the assets of our children, in order that we may satisfy our pride, and enjoy the luxuries of overbuilt, over-ornate houses of worship?" Have not many of us witnessed church edifices with seating capacities twice as large as needed?

Is debt, or the lack of it, a question of wealth, or of management? "Debts are not accidents," writes a prominent minister, "but are the result of too much ambition, pride, enthusiasm, speculation and mismanagement."

● *Results of Ill-Conceived Promotion*

According to one of America's leading certified public accountants, who has audited the books of many churches in distress, "In modern church finance, the last decade — probably more than any other in church history—has witnessed the burden of church debts, many of them unwisely contracted for expansion of plants, with the result that a double penalty is exacted: first, the expenses of upkeep are permanently increased; second, the burdens of interest and depreciation are extended for a long period of time. This discouraging aftermath of ill-conceived promotion, of course, is not out of line with the financing of many business enterprises that failed, but the lesson is painfully continuing to show that expansion should be from within, and not merely from without."

Said a courageous pastor of a city church carrying a fifteen-year building debt of more than $40,000 on a $150,000 property: "Our building project was launched in a congregation of divided opinion. Some felt that $20,000 would rehabilitate the old building in a satisfactory manner; others wanted to go ahead with the new building, even though $60,000 would need to be borrowed. A high-pressure campaign was launched, with the result that many were persuaded to give beyond their ability to pay. Others met their pledges, and then took their letters to neighboring churches. Some became disgruntled, and refused to pay at all. Legal suits were instituted to compel the settlement of certain building pledges, which alienated another group. The building committee faced a difficult task. Temporary lights were installed in the unfinished auditorium, the exposed pipes of the organ and the walls were never painted. The more pretentious building called for more and better furniture than that with which the old building was equipped, but funds were

Robert Cashman

exhausted and the church has tried to get along with the old, inadequate and dilapidated equipment."

"Men will change golf clubs because of debt," testified a leading layman, "and they will do the same with the church."

● *Some Staggering Figures*

According to government statistics, the churches of America are carrying a load of nearly half a billion dollars of debt. Proportionate to the total value of church properties, this would mean that one-eighth of all church equities is mortgaged in one form or another. At current rates of interest, these obligations would require interest payments of $25,000,000 annually. Should not this money be going into pastors' salaries, promotion of educational programs, and upkeep of plant equipment, instead of to banks, mortgage holders and others who operate for a profit on their investments?

Since the general improvement in business conditions, I have had a growing conviction that *now is the time* for churches to take courage, and to launch adequate programs to liquidate their debts. I have sought counsel from denominational boards, investment companies, bankers, and from the ministe and laymen of three hundred churche mostly in the Middle West. I ha been almost overwhelmed with t problems of debt that have been pr sented, and I have been impressed wi the dearth of constructive suggestio for liquidation.

● *Revealing Facts Abo Church Deb*

From my survey, it is revealed th practically all outstanding church o ligations have been for new buildin or the enlargement or remodeling old buildings; new equipment, inclu ing heating plants; repairs and r newals such as new roofs, decoratin etc. A small percentage of the deb has accrued to meet current deficits.

These obligations are mostly in t form of mortgages (including bond and notes to banks and individuals; 9 per cent being mortgages, and 10 p cent notes.

The debts are from one to twent five years old, the average being eleve years, which would indicate that in t good financial days churches were i clined to expand, without setting u adequate amortization plans to liqu date their debts within a reasonab time.

The interest rates on which mor gages, bonds and similar obligatio are carried range from 2 per cent 7 per cent, the average being 5 p cent.

Of the churches surveyed, 57 p cent are paying their interest prompt 14 per cent have not paid interest due, and 29 per cent of the obligatio are being carried without interest.

Eighty per cent of the churches r porting have taken or are taking ste to reduce their debts, while 20 p cent are contemplating no action.

Reductions are being made mostly including capital payments in the cu rent budgets, although many church have launched special campaigns, tal ing from one- to five-year subscriptio to cover all or part of their past du obligations.

● *Have the Debts Hu the Churches*

In answer to our question as whether or not the spiritual life ha suffered in recent years by the attitu of the church toward financial oblig tions, 70 per cent said "Yes" and em phasized this point by such testimon as the following:

Our church is too debt-conscious.

Money emphasis has overshadowe our religious program.

New members do not join churche with heavy debts.

Outsiders do not respect a church that is in debt.

It has cut down our missionary giving.

The sharp practices used by our trustees in securing discounts have hurt our reputation.

"What is the reputation of your church with the general banking interests of your community?" we asked. Eighty per cent felt that the church was in good standing, while 20 per cent seemed to have thought that churches had lost their financial reputation with the banks. Many of those reporting good credit revealed the fact that the officers of the banks were also officers of the church.

From an investment company which has placed more than $100,000,000 of church mortgages, there came this statement: "We are gratified to say that, by and large, this type of security stood up very well during the depression. The great majority of our loans have carried through in strict accordance with the original promises to pay. On the other hand, we have been faced with problems with respect to some church loans that have reflected unfavorably upon the organizations involved. In those cases where bondholders have been forced to take a loss in their investment, feeling has run rather high, and the credit standing, not only of the particular church units involved, but also of the denominations represented, has been marred."

● *Now Is the Time! Say the Experts*

As to whether or not the time had come for aggressive action on the part of the churches, looking toward the liquidation of their debts, the opinion was almost unanimous that no time is better than the present.

"I was in a beautiful structure the other day," wrote a clergyman, "that was built in 1929 largely with borrowed money. Nothing had been done to reduce the debt. I was shocked at the appearance of the building—stained walls, cracked cement, dirty rooms, and a general appearance of neglect and abuse. There is no hope for this church unless it can soon gain back much that has been lost. Benevolences and educational programs have suffered alike. The debt has defeated the program, and the lack of a vital program has defeated the payment of the debt."

Of great encouragement have been the reports of several of the larger denominational boards. According to one: "Our properties are valued at $176,000,000, of which our total mortgage indebtedness is only 6 per cent, while 74 per cent of our churches have no indebtedness whatever." This denomination employs an expert financial adviser to assist its backward churches, and counsels all of its churches to be "very careful about assuming new building obligations" at this time.

Another denomination lists its properties at $265,322,099, with a total indebtedness of $27,242,522, or about 10 per cent. Its delinquency on principal is $5,316,410; and on interest, $614,123. "Except in rare instances, our churches are meeting their debt situations in a way to reflect great credit upon themselves, and upon the denomination as a whole."

One of the denominations has a "Division of Finance" with six men in the field who are constantly aiding the churches in dealing with their debt problems.

● *Suggested Methods for Debt Liquidation*

As to what methods should be used for the liquidation of church debts, among the suggestions received were the following:

Sell out the church and liquidate.

Promote new drives or campaigns for definite units of the church obligation: if the church has mortgages on its place of worship and on its parsonage and perhaps a note at the bank for past current deficits, launch a campaign to clear the smaller items first.

Take special offerings at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, preceded by proper promotion.

Launch a larger missionary program, to make the church look away from its own troubles.

Refinance at lower interest, by new bank loans, bonds, etc.

Have a Century Club with 100 people giving $1.00 a month until a certain obligation has been met.

Elect a special group outside the Board of Trustees to be responsible for this one object of reducing the church debt.

Encourage tithing and stewardship.

Seek bequests and annuities, though counsel was given that "an endowed cat catches no mice."

Dispose of all unnecessary or unused property such as vacant real estate.

Take out endowment insurance on church members.

Unite in an effort with all churches having deficits, and promote a community drive.

Secure the help of industries, where their workers are members of the churches.

Promote Golden Jubilee and other similar anniversaries, with special emphasis on finance.

In the study of "Church Debts and Their Liquidation," it appears that a great many ministers and boards of laymen have sought some indirect way to meet their obligations. Evidently they have expected a miracle to happen. If we purchase a home or an automobile or a piano on a contract or mortgage basis, we must pay the amounts as they become due, or lose our property. But when we receive the same benefits in the name of the church, we seem not to take seriously the signatures of our board at the banks, or the amortization of the bonded indebtedness.

● *Notable Achievements of Debt-Bound Churches*

Let us consider such organizations as that of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, California, where, under the leadership of its able young minister, Dr. James W. Fifield, a deficit of half a million dollars was assumed without question. Building the service and the financial programs simultaneously, this church has not only been reducing its debt steadily, but it has increased its paid and volunteer staff, until in one of its recent weekly bulletins an annual budget of $232,100 was announced, to include $100,000 on principal indebtedness; this to be raised not by indirect methods, but by sacrificial giving.

The Bryn Mawr Community Church in Chicago, with a debt of $105,000, has organized the Bryn Mawr Community Church Trust, under a board of five prominent laymen as trustees, for the immediate purpose of raising funds to pay off the mortgage indebtedness on the church. This trust has already secured several very substantial subscriptions which have made possible the purchase of outstanding bonds at considerably less than par. A five-year plan is contemplated for total liquidation.

This message is not intended for that great majority of churches which have managed their affairs with methods of highest business efficiency, but rather for that group of faithful ministers and Christian laymen who are seeking to solve the problems of debt that have been left to them, and also for that younger generation of leaders who, through inexperience, may be tempted to repeat the mistakes of the past.

● *Let Us Not Compromise the Church!*

It is better to meet the challenge of any situation, no matter how difficult, than to compromise the church. Our people must be made conscious of their sacred obligations. Tremendous sacrifice may be required on their part to meet them, but out of the conquest will come new life and growth to the church. It is wise to set a goal, and to divide this goal into units that can be reached. For example, if it is planned to meet a debt in five, ten or twenty years, it is better to make weekly, or monthly payments (even ahead of the current budget) than simply to put into the annual budget a certain amount, to be met when convenient.

If Nehemiah and his followers could rebuild the walls of Jerusalem under discouragements such as we can never know, then as pastors and laymen of the Church of Christ, let us rise to new realms of courage and industry, to solve the problem of our church debts, and thereby maintains the dignity and the strength of the Universal Church.

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

Receiving his A.B. degree at Yale in 1922, Rev. DWIGHT C. SMITH taught at Yale-in-China for two years. In 1927 he was awarded his B.D. degree at Yale Divinity School. Since 1927 he has ministered at First Congregational Church, Bellingham, Wash. From 1934 to 1936 Mr. Smith was on leave of absence for study in the University of Edinburgh, where he was awarded his Ph.D. degree with the class of 1936.

Rev. RICHARD C. RAINES *has ministered* at the Hennepin Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, since 1930. Earlier pastorates were in Newton and Scituate, Mass., and Providence, R. I. Mr. Raines received his education at Cornell College, Boston University and Oxford University. He is a trustee of Cornell College and Hamline University and is a member of the Federal Council's commission on evangelism. The sermon published in this issue was preached before the Chicago Sunday Evening Club.

Following a long period of service as associate professor of Semitic languages and literature in the University of Chicago, Dr. HERBERT L. WILLETT became professor of Oriental languages and literatures in 1915 and held that post until 1929, when he retired with the emeritus relation. During his teaching career Dr. Willett has ministered to churches of greater Chicago. He is now pastor of Kenilworth (Ill.) Union Church. He is a contributing editor of The Christian Century, with which paper he has been actively connected for more than a generation.

Following a long ministry at Allentown, Pa., Rev. WILLIAM E. BROOKS went to his present field of service—First Presbyterian Church, Morgantown, W. Va. Mr. Brooks has been prominent in the general activities of his denomination and is known in the literary field as the author of a biography of Robert E. Lee. He is one of the editors of the *Presbyterian Banner.*

An Australian by birth, Rev. FREDERICK W. NORWOOD won wide fame by his long ministry at the City Temple in London. A little more than a year ago he retired from the active ministry to give his entire time to the cause of peace and good will. In a tour of the world concluded last year he preached in many lands.

Early last month death brought to a close the useful career of Rev. HAROLD B. CAMP, who since 1930 had led the activities of the First Baptist Church, Oakland, Cal. The sermon "The Christian and His City," which Mr. Camp submitted to the Pulpit several weeks ago, reveals the strong faith and social vision which had made him "one of the most influential ministers on the Pacific coast," as a friend characterized him. In 1925 Mr. Camp became pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of New Haven, Conn. Prof. William Lyon Phelps, a member of this church, said of his work there: "Harold Camp has accomplished more in five years than many men could in fifty." His service in Oakland also was notable. Mr. Camp was a native of Nova Scotia and received his theological education in Newton Theological Institution.

Rev. ARTHUR H. BRADFORD, *a son of* the revered Amory H. Bradford, has been minister at the Central Congregational Church, Providence, R. I., for the past twenty years. Early in his preaching career he was assistant minister in the South Church, Springfield, Mass., and minister of the Congregational Church in Rutland, Vt. His education was received at Yale University and Union Seminary. He is a trustee of Yale, also of Anatolia College in Greece. Mr. Bradford has served as president of the Rhode Island Congregational Conference and the Ministers' Union of that state. He is now a member of the executive committee of the General Council of Congregational-Christian Churches.

Rev. EDWIN A. GOLDSWORTHY *is pastor* of the First Baptist Church, Rahway, N. J.

Mr. ROBERT CASHMAN *is business manager* of the Chicago Theological Seminary and author of the new book, *The Business Administration of a Church.*

TITLES AND TEXTS — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

ROBERT S. MILLER, First Unitarian, Omaha, Neb. "Life's Unearned Increment." I Cor. 4:7—"And what have you got that you have not been given?" (Goodspeed)

CLAUDE ALLEN MCKAY, First Congregational, Binghamton, N. Y. "Wells and Cisterns." John 4:11—"Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep."

KENNETH IRVING BROWN, president Hiram College. "The Measure of a Man." Exod. 2:11—"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens . . ."

KENDIG B. CULLY, First Congregational, Southwick, Mass. "A Christian Looks at the Headlines." I Cor. 7:13—"Let those who mix in the world live as if they were not engrossed in it." (Moffatt)

W. NELSON WINTERS, Calvary Evangelical, Baltimore, Md. "Let Us Alone." Exod. 14:12—"Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians."

WALTER D. CAVERT, Presbyterian, Oswego, N. Y. "The Understanding Heart." Ezek. 3:15—"I sat where they sat."

GEORGE M. MILLER, Methodist Episcopal, Linden, N. J. "Poison Gas or Oxygen." Gal. 3:16—"To the one a deathly, deadly odor, to the other, a vital, life-giving one." (Goodspeed)

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

Title of Sermon

Text used (write out the text)

Name of minister

Name of church

Address

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

YES, the United States is represented at the meeting of the League of Nations whenever the war in China is the subject of consideration. The announcement of this fact has startled some people who hold the league and all its works taboo. Secretary Cordell Hull has authorized Mr. Wilson, the American minister to Switzerland, to participate in these deliberations. This is distinctly a wise thing to do. All the nations represented at Geneva are signatories of the Kellogg Pact. There is no reason why the United States should stand aloof and insist upon conferring with these nations one by one, around Robin Hood's barn, when it comes to deciding on any course of action with reference to Japan or any other international situation involving the peace of the world. I do not understand how far Mr. Wilson may go in participating in these sessions. But Mr. Hull is evidently following the lead given by Mr. Stimson in the Hoover administration when, in the case of the Manchurian invasion, he authorized our minister to Switzerland to sit with league members, not as league members, but as signatories of the Kellogg Pact. The United States is not a member of the league, but all members of the league are signers of the pact. In the orbit of the pact this country can, and legally as well as morally should, take counsel with all fellow-signatories when the pact is violated. This does not commit the United States in advance to any specific course of action, but it does offer a way of discharging whatever responsibility this country may decide belongs to it in concert with other parties to the treaty outlawing war. I am not hopeful that anything practical will result from this consultative contact in the Japanese case, but it is well to note that we are at Geneva in this capacity. It may be a precedent for action some other day if not today.

U. S. At Geneva

The Book of the Month

YOU CAN FIND GOD, *by Edward Shillito. Willett, Clark & Company. $2.00.*

ONE of the rarest spirits in British Christianity, loved and trusted and read in all the churches, is Edward Shillito. For nearly twenty years he has written a weekly letter to The Christian Century which has made his name known widely to the American Christian public. Few know that he is Quintus Quiz, that very human writer whose letter appears in the editorial pages of the same journal. Now he has written a new book. He has put his wise heart into every page of it. He affirms that every man can find God—not preachers and mystics and persons with a peculiar bent toward religion, but the man in the street, the student, the scholar, the clerk—the average man of your congregation and the man or woman or child below the average. God is the most available, accessible fact in the world, he declares. He devotes this book to the grateful task of showing us *how* we may find him. His inclusive answer is that we find God by letting him find us! It is as simple as that! But like all simple things, it calls for interpretation and for implementation. In a beautifully luminous chapter Mr. Shillito claims that we can find God in church! We can find him in the darkness! We can find him among our friends! We can find him in our work! But we must not seek him for some selfish purpose of our own—merely to use him as an aid in carrying out our selfish interests, but for himself, and his own sake. We must let him find us. I know what you will do with this book if by God's providence it falls into your hands: You will read it with spiritual delight and you will lay it on a shelf or little table near your desk. When your own thoughts grow thin you will pick it up for a moment or two, and then turn back to your work and your reflection, your mind and heart glowing with new insight.

A Thought for the Month

WE ministers fall too easily into the delusion that the gospel is a matter of words. Our business is a word business. I do not wish to derogate one whit from the dignity and the indispensableness of this word business. But the gospel requires more than words if it is to be faithfully presented. It requires to be acted. Indeed our preaching is no gospel at all unless the Act upon which it is based, and the action which it evokes in its believers, are kept constantly to the front. By the Act on which the gospel is based I mean, of course, the Word become flesh. Even God could not tell us the gospel in bare words—he had to act it out before our eyes. By the actions which the gospel evokes in believers, I mean that the word of the gospel requires interpretation by conduct befitting the gospel. This conduct, Paul said, was his most important epistle, greater than Romans or either of Corinthians—and do not forget that First Corinthians includes its thirteenth chapter! "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men." And worship is an act. "The highest," as Goethe said, "cannot be spoken." Words will not convey it. This is why our worship calls for something more than preaching. It calls for ceremony, for liturgy. These are the celebration of the gospel. The Lord's Supper and baptism—the sacraments, as we call them—are the gospel in action. How much more meaningful baptism is than merely to say to a person, You are now a member of the church! How much more meaningful is the Lord's Supper than merely to be told that Christ died for us! In the sacrament we not only hear something that is said and assent to it, we actually enter into it, we participate in the saving action of Christ. We are buried *with* him and *with* him we rise. We fill up the cup of his sacrifice. The sacraments are not optional or incidental. Without them I do not think Christianity could survive. They are the acted gospel.

The Acted Gospel

Charles Clayton Morrison

The Last Word in Sermon Illumination

The Encyclopedia of Illustrations

THE original ideal of Rev. STANLEY I. STUBER, editor and compiler of this unique volume, as well as of its publishers, was exceedingly high. It was the purpose to produce the very best such compilation ever brought together. So great has been the interest of the hundreds of ministers who are aiding in the assembling of material for the book, and so unlimited the possibilities of such a volume, that it has been decided to take more time for its completion, so that when the book is published there may be available the most comprehensive, the most inspiring, the most interesting anthology of illustrations that can be produced.

To that end, Mr. Stuber is now renewing his call to the thousands of ministers who read the Christian Century Pulpit to make this autumn a time for more eager research to bring to light their favorite illustrations as candidates for inclusion in the Encyclopedia. Let them again search through their libraries and in their files of magazines and papers, as well as in their homiletic memories, for illustrations which throw light upon such subjects as: God, Christ, the Incarnation, the Cross, the Inner Life, the Church, the Bible, Sin, the Gospel, Faith, Service, Brotherhood, Missions, Evangelism, Patriotism, Peace, Social Justice, Youth, Thanksgiving, Immortality, etc., etc.

This call goes also to those persons who have already sent their group of ten illustrations with a view to the awards offered: Send other illustrations, simply to aid in the production of the best Encyclopedia possible.

Note below awards for the best groups of ten illustrations, also the rules of the competition.

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$50 for the best group of ten.

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Copies of the book will be given to the 25 ministers or divinity students submitting the next 25 best groups of ten.

In case of ties, duplicate awards will be made.

The compiler will be the sole arbiter as to the merits of illustrations.

SEND YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS NOW, OBSERVING THESE RULES:

1. No person may enter more than one group of of ten illustrations.
2. Author and source must be given when illustration is not original.
3. Illustrations may be typewritten, or they may be submitted as clipped from magazines and papers, neatly pasted on white paper. (No script manuscripts accepted.)
4. All illustrations received are to be considered available for inclusion in the Encyclopedia, whether they earn awards or not.
5. Your *group of ten illustrations* should be mailed, early as possible, to Rev. Stanley I. Stuber, First Baptist Church, Clifton Springs, N. Y.

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